ARTICLES

Dvorkin's Reich

This interview with Otstavnykh was pub although he had left 2013.

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Based on the statements of a former RACIRS member

RACIRS is a Russian pro-religious organization that, over 30 years of its activity, has succeeded in shutting down and suppressing numerous peaceful organizations in Russia. Nazi methods, the ideological legacy of Nazi ideologue and anticult advocate Walter Künneth, the artificial creation and labeling of "enemies" for the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and Russia, along with aggressive hate rhetoric — all of this is present in RACIRS thanks to its founder and president, Alexander Dvorkin.

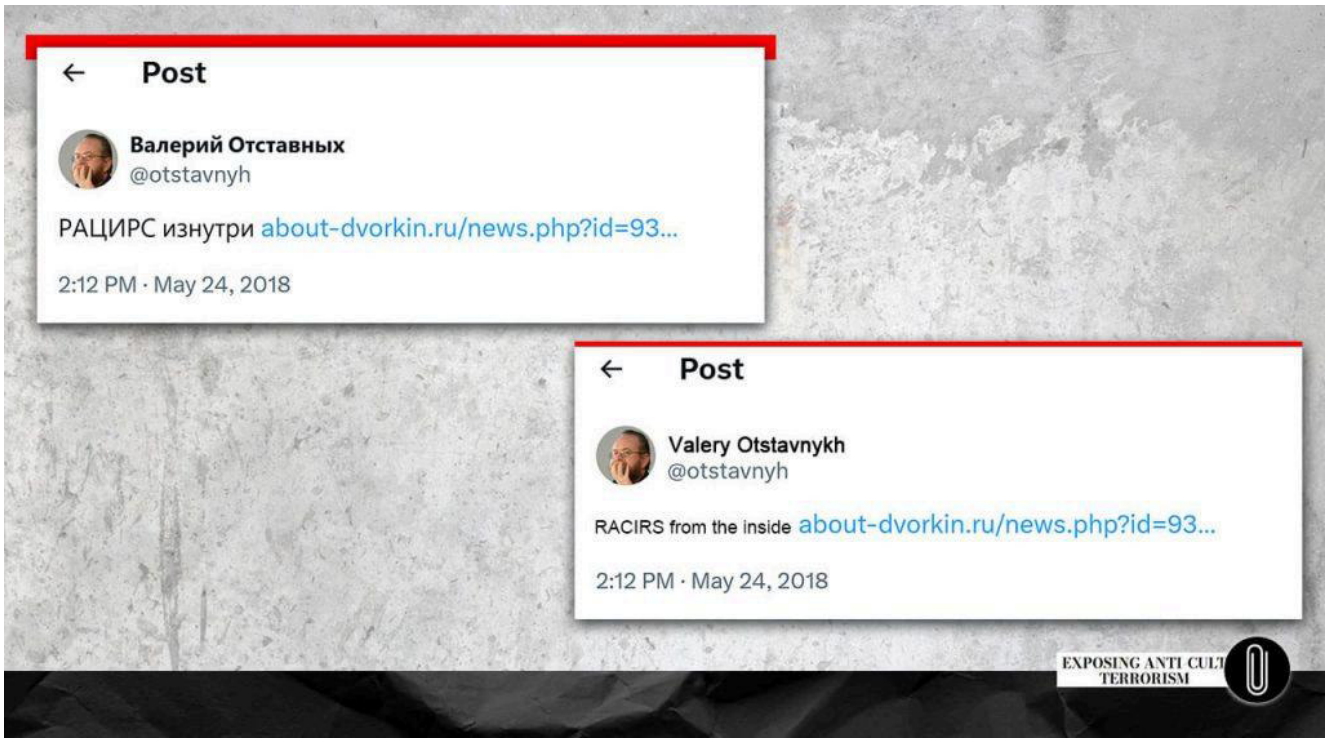
Over decades of close cooperation between Dvorkin's apologists and law enforcement agencies, RACIRS' totalitarian ideology of enforced uniformity

has been implanted into Russian society, law enforcement entities, and even the ROC. This has resulted in merging of the church with the state, establishment of a titular religion, and transformation of the nation's agenda from democratic to unlawful and inhumane, promoting the ideology of one group's superiority over others. A substantial amount of factual evidence, testimonies, and documents has been collected and made public to corroborate this.

President of RACIRS, Alexander Dvorkin

A crucial addition to the existing information comes from firsthand accounts by those who were part of RACIRS for many years and saw the organization from within.

One such individual is Valeriy Otstavnykh who was a member of RACIRS for an extended period of time before leaving the organization in 2013. He announced his departure in a blog post on the Echo of Moscow website [1]. Five years later, in 2018, an interview with Valeriy Otstavnykh was published, exposing the inner workings of RACIRS, its collaboration with security services, and its ideological and repressive role within the ROC. Otstavnykh made a post about this interview on his X (formerly Twitter) page (@otstavnyh) [2], providing a link to the original source and the interview title, "RACIRS from the Inside."



Unfortunately, we have discovered that the interview page has since been deleted. However, several copies of it have survived on alternative platforms, citing Valeriy Otstavnykh with links to the original source and the same title, “RACIRS from the Inside.” [3, 4].

Before proceeding to the information presented in the said interview, it is worth mentioning another interesting fact that also prompted us to record valuable testimony of the former RACIRS member on the actfiles.org portal. For some time now, there has been a noticeable trend of removal of the online content exposing instances of anticult terrorism and unlawful actions of individuals involved in anticult activities. This observation is the result of a long-term online monitoring effort tracking activities of the international network of anticult agents.

To ensure the preservation of truthful information and create a comprehensive picture of what is happening, we consider it important to include in this article details from the interview with former RACIRS member Valeriy Otstavnykh [3, 4].

Valeriy Otstavnykh is first from the left, Alexander Dvorkin is third from the left. Photo sourced from the news portal IslamNews

Below are excerpts from the interview.

"RESIGNATION FROM RACIRS

— Valeriy Vladimirovich, in 2013, you resigned from all your positions within the Russian Orthodox Church and, as I understand, also left RACIRS at that time, right?

— Well, 'from all positions' is a bit of an ironic expression. At that time, I held the position of Deputy Head of the Missionary Department of Tula Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (I even still have the certificate with the diocesan seal). I was accepted into RACIRS when I was already working at the Missionary Department. I first left RACIRS and later the ROC (Moscow Patriarchate)...

— How did that happen?

— It was quite simple. I was publishing blog posts on the Echo of Moscow website, often addressing church-related topics. This was long before Andrei Kuraev appeared on Echo. At the time, my posts were gaining many views, and

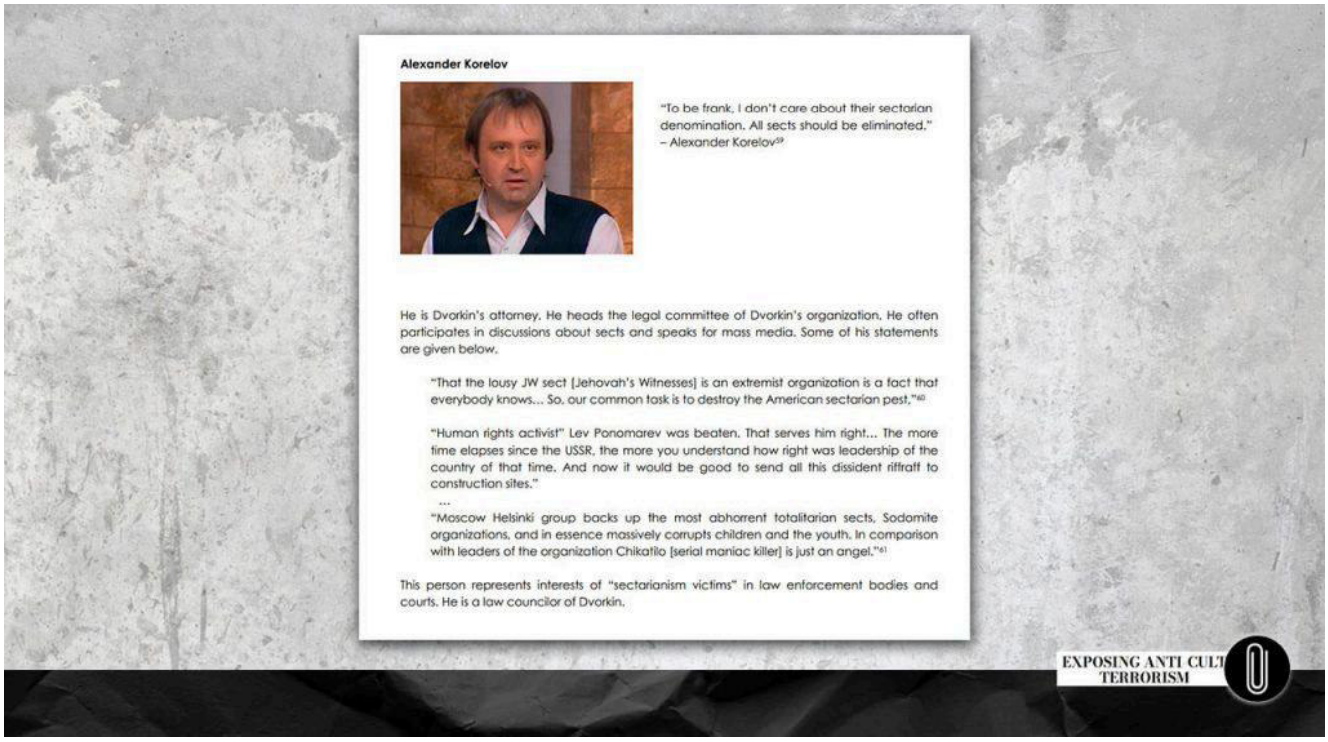
I was constantly being called for comments on church-related events. I criticized the church quite harshly in my articles, but the local metropolitan and I had a certain agreement, and he had a certain tolerance for me. He used to say, 'Valeriy, I only have one request: whenever you write something under your own name, please make it clear it's your personal opinion. And when you speak on behalf of the Missionary Department, please coordinate your texts with the department leadership.' I think that was a reasonable and correct stance.

Still, my posts were quite harsh. Within RACIRS, there's this individual, a lawyer named Korelov. So, he and I once clashed on the sidelines of the Christmas readings in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior; it wasn't just an argument but an all-out fight. Of course, he was reading my blogs. I believe he and some other RACIRS members pressured Alexander Leonidovich [Dvorkin] who, through our mutual acquaintance Alexei Yarasov (who worked with me in the Tula Diocese Missionary Department), relayed a request. He said, 'For everything to remain quiet and peaceful in RACIRS, could Valeriy do us a favor of formally resigning? He could even just verbally convey (again through Yarasov) that he's leaving the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects on his own initiative.'

At that point, I realized staying there was pointless since my views on the church and life had changed significantly, especially since late 2011. So I said, 'Yes, of course. If he needs it for the records, he can write that I requested my resignation on my own initiative.' I assume this was done at one of their subsequent meetings."

It is worth pausing here to briefly mention Mr. Korelov referenced in the interview. Alexander Korelov is a lawyer and chairman of the Legal Committee for the Protection of Rights and Dignity of the Individual at RACIRS. His activities and radical stance on organizations labeled by RACIRS as "sects" and "cults" has been summarized in a 2010 analytical article "Religious Extremism of Alexander Dvorkin" [5].

"To be frank, I don't care about their sectarian denomination. All sects should be eliminated," said Alexander Korelov. Let us remind you that this is the stance of a man who deals with the law and, therefore, with the Constitution and such fundamental principles as human rights and the presumption of innocence.


Alexander Korelov
"To be frank, I don't care about their sectarian denomination. All sects should be eliminated."
– Alexander Korelov[59]
He is Dvorkin's attorney. He heads the legal committee of Dvorkin's organization. He often participates in discussions about sects and speaks for mass media. Some of his statements are given below.
"That the lousy JW sect [Jehovah's Witnesses] is an extremist organization is a fact that everybody knows... So, our common task is to destroy the American sectarian pest."[60]
"Human rights activist" Lev Ponomarev was beaten. That serves him right... The more time elapses since the USSR, the more you understand how right was leadership of the country of that time. And now it would be good to send all this dissident riffraff to construction sites."
...
"Moscow Helsinki group backs up the most abhorrent totalitarian sects, Sodomite organizations, and in essence massively corrupts children and the youth. In comparison with leaders of the organization Chikatilo [serial maniac killer] is just an angel."[61]
This person represents interests of "sectarianism victims" in law enforcement bodies and courts. He is a law councilor of Dvorkin.
EXPOSING ANTI CULT TERRORISM

Screenshot from the website sectes-info.com [5]

Another quote by Korelov about Jehovah's Witnesses reads, *"That the lousy JW sect [Jehovah's Witnesses] is an extremist organization is a fact that everybody knows... So, our common task is to destroy the American sectarian pest."*

We actually doubt Valeriy Otstavnykh's assumption that Korelov pressured Alexander Dvorkin regarding Otstavnykh's request to leave RACIRS "on his own initiative." To date, there is ample evidence proving that persecutions and interfaith and intra-church repressions in Russia are initiated specifically by RACIRS president Alexander Dvorkin and are carried out by his subordinates. If figures such as Korelov play any role in this process, it is limited to searching dissenters and reporting them to Dvorkin. The fact supporting this assumption will be provided below in the case of the smear campaign, discreditation, and organized persecution of ROC priest Vladimir Golovin. But for now, let's return to the interview.

"— So, it turns out that being a member of RACIRS requires not only fighting against sects, but also adhering to a specific ideological stance?

— That's how it turns out. However, my approach to sects was somewhat different.

— How did it differ from RACIRS' approach?

— I'll tell you about my first work-related encounter with Dvorkin, and you'll understand. It all started when I suggested inviting Dvorkin to a diocesan meeting. I had known Dvorkin from Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University where I studied. I learned from his books and naturally saw him there at lectures and so on, though only from a distance. So, I decided to reach out and invited him to Tula to speak to the clergy, and he came.

It was a very important visit. I remember it clearly: when I spoke, I talked about how the first Christians, the apostles, and their disciples — the 'apostolic fathers' — focused on positive mission work, spreading the Word of God. They didn't persecute those who didn't share their views or those who had once been faithful to Christ but then broke away. They simply distanced themselves from such individuals. As the Gospel says, 'If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you... if they will not listen, take one or two others along... and if they refuse again, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.' This was the attitude of Christ's immediate disciples, even toward sectarians.

So, speaking before such a large gathering, I asked why we don't follow their example today, but seek to collaborate with state agencies, designating individuals or organizations as destructive just because they preach differently or allegedly harm people and the state — a harm that is yet to be proven in court. And so on...

Moreover, if we take the Russian Orthodox Church and look at the number of its members who have committed terrible crimes... One is insane, another is a drunkard, a third is a criminal, others abuse children, forcing them to 'practice

hesychasm', and so forth. There are enough cases to potentially ban the ROC (MP) as well. I ***said I couldn't imagine Christ going to Pontius Pilate and saying, 'Mr. Pilate, you see, there's this organization that is so destructive and so wrong. Could you send soldiers and, as a prosecutor, take prosecutive measures against this religious organization which, as we believe, is led by a madman?' I simply cannot picture that.***

That was my speech. As I was later told, most of the seminarians, the young men from the Tula Theological Seminary present in the hall, supported me. Dvorkin then gave a special speech after mine, even though he had already delivered his report before me. He said, 'Valeriy gave a speech, but he's wrong.'

During the coffee break, Dvorkin approached me and said, 'Valeriy, you gave a very good speech, but you know, when I was younger, about your age, I was also this kind of naive person ***who thought that we should treat sectarians in a Christian way; that we shouldn't persecute them and shouldn't fight against them. I used to believe that, as the wise ruler in the Acts of the Apostles said, if a "strange missionary" is not from God, his teaching will die on its own, but if it is from God, it is futile and even wrong to oppose it. I held the same view, but over time, I realized that we MUST fight. We must fight by any means available, including cooperation with law enforcement agencies, the judicial system, the prosecutor's office…'*** *and so on. That was our first discussion."*

According to this excerpt, in conversation with another RACIRS member, Alexander Dvorkin personally encouraged using anti-Christian methods against those they branded as "sectarians" and "cultists." This is hardly surprising, considering the Nazi lineage of the anti-Christian methods inherited by Dvorkin from Walter Künneth.

Alexander Dvorkin's true attitude toward the teaching of Jesus Christ and the essence of Christianity can be clearly seen in one of his remarks. Let us quote Dvorkin's words and then provide an excerpt from the New Testament.

"You constantly hear the same arguments: 'God is one, so why do people invent different religions?' 'God is in the soul' — as if, forgive me, God is mold

that appears in the soul by itself. I always want to ask this question: 'From what moment did He appear in you, and how do you actually know that He is there? What are the fruits and what is the name of the God in your soul — do you know this?' Then it means: 'God is in the soul, so why go to church?'" — Alexander Dvorkin, "Problems of the Mission of the Modern Russian Orthodox Church". [6]

With this statement, Alexander Dvorkin criticized the fundamental theological concept of the soul, a key tenet of Christianity: that God is one and that God is within a human. RACIRS president not only distorted the essence of Christian teaching and the peaceful Orthodox tradition as a whole, but openly rejected the words of Jesus Christ by calling God within the human soul "mold."

Meanwhile, the Bible states, *"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the* ***kingdom of God is within you****."* (Luke 17:20–21).

The Bible also says: *"Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one".` (Mark 12:29).*

It is fitting to add statements of Orthodox theologians recognized by the Russian Orthodox Church:

"*The soul is the image of God, inscribed by God Himself. It is spirit. It is free and immortal and must be pure, bright, and full of love as God's image." — Metropolitan Anthony of Saint Petersburg*

"The soul before God is the Church." — St. Macarius the Great

It is no coincidence that St. Macarius the Great defined the soul as the church since the key role of the church is to be the dwelling place of God. But apparently, neither the wisdom of Orthodox theologians recognized by the ROC nor the teaching of Jesus Christ mean anything to Alexander Dvorkin. For RACIRS president, such statements seem equivalent to discussing mold.

This is not the first time that the true attitude of self-proclaimed fighters against “sects” and “cults” toward Christian teaching and Jesus Christ can be determined not only by their inhumane, godless deeds, but also by their direct statements which slipped out from under their hypocritical mask of protecting traditional religions.

The former head of one of the first anticult organizations — CAN (which, by the way, many researchers have directly linked to Alexander Dvorkin while he resided in the United States), Cynthia Kisser, once admitted that if Jesus Christ were alive today, they would unleash their full arsenal of anticult methods against him and then hand that information over to the media for the publication of anticult smear materials about his “fringe activities,” “abuses,” and “deceptive practices” [7].

“When it comes to examining an organization, the words of its top officials are often instructive, and the views of the last executive director of the old CAN, Cynthia Kisser, shed much light on the agenda of CAN’s former leaders and explain their fascination with Christians. ‘If [Jesus Christ] were alive now,’ she told the Cleveland Plain Dealer, ‘we’d take an interest in him because of the great controversy surrounding his fringe activities… We’d try to see if there was abuse, unethical behavior, or deceptive practices. And I’d send whatever we could find to reporters.’” [7]

Let’s recall that the now-defunct anticult organization CAN is notorious for a legion of proven criminal acts, including kidnappings for the purpose of forced deprogramming, followed by criminal convictions. Many of its members and partners were accused and convicted of crimes, with numerous individuals found guilty of criminal charges related to abduction and unlawful detention.

Yet, let’s go back to the interview with Valeriy Otstavnykh.

“— What did membership in RACIRS actually entail? Attending conferences?

— It wasn’t just about conferences. There was active work to counter what we called destructive religious organizations. At the same time, we opened a

center for rehabilitating victims of totalitarian sects and cults as well as their families. But to be honest, those who came to us were mostly not victims but their parents — mothers and fathers." ***

Those were mothers and fathers who, before seeking help, had been immersed in Dvorkin's anticult rhetoric either through manipulative newspaper articles, anticultists' radio and TV appearances, or lectures, where RACIRS apologists employed the full range of methods and expertise to instill narratives of the titular religion's superiority and the supposed danger of other organizations they labeled as "sects" and "cults." As a result, the groups dehumanized by anticultists and branded with the derogatory label of "cultists" and "sectarians" appeared far more dangerous in the eyes of misled parents whose minds had been conditioned by those apologists than the true heirs and followers of the Nazi ideologue Künneth.

* The interaction between anticult activists and relatives of people who were preemptively labeled as "sectarians" and "cultists," as well as the related phenomenon of creating an apostate-fake victim, have been discussed in the previously published article, "The Role of Apostates in Anti-Cult Organizations: Creating the Fake Victim."

"— What else did you do as a branch of RACIRS?

— At some point, we shifted our focus to internal Orthodox issues, that is, to pseudo-Orthodoxy. And once again, we invited Dvorkin to our city. This was his second major visit which I also organized.

At the Holy Ascension Church in Tula where our department was based at that time, there was a wooden room downstairs with draped windows. With the help of a friend who was an excellent gallery manager, we set up a pseudo-Orthodox iconostasis there, with holy doors and so on. Upstairs, we had icons of Ivan the Terrible (painted on canvas, of course), Slavik of Chebarkul, and Adolf Hitler ("Saint Athaulf")... because there are indeed fascist religious organizations that venerate Göring, Hitler, and the like as saints. There was an entrance through the holy doors, and behind them, in that space, was a

basement. We deliberately left the basement hatch — a wooden hatch — open, turned on a light inside so that it glowed from below, and placed a rubber mouse near the hatch as if it were trying to scurry into this religious underground.

It was a spectacular installation. All the guests were stunned, Dvorkin himself was stunned, and the priests were stunned. Dvorkin started taking pictures of everything and eagerly posed for photos in our holy doors with the pseudo-iconostasis. On the sides, just like in a museum exhibition, we had shelves displaying pseudo-Orthodox books about all sorts of so-called miracle-working elders, grandmothers, grandfathers, and so on. There was also a selection of pseudo-Orthodox press. This, of course, completely floored him: he had never seen anticult work like this before. I think Alexander Leonidovich was in a state of horrific delight.

On top of that, we held a public discussion, if I recall correctly, on the topic of his new book "Ivan the Terrible as a Religious Type."

The above passage raises a question: If Alexander Dvorkin isn't particularly thrilled by the verses of the New Testament about the One God who dwells within a human, what exactly was the cause of his unrestrained, overt enthusiasm over an installation featuring holy doors and a pseudo-iconostasis, including icons of Hitler — the ideological successor whom Dvorkin himself embodies? What is the Russian pro-religious association RACIRS actually mocking?

"HE CONSIDERS EVERYONE AROUND TO BE TOO MUCH OF A 'VERMIN'

"— You mentioned that your first serious discussion with Alexander Dvorkin took place during his initial visit when he told you that he had once shared your approach to missionary work and apologetics, but later changed his stance. Looking back now, do you think your own approach has changed as well, or do you still have the same attitude you expressed back then?

— You know, for a while, I supported A. Dvorkin's idea of a relentless fight against 'sects.' But our approach to this 'fight' started shifting even before I left the Missionary Department. We had already begun discussing the fact that, yes, 'Sectology' is a good book, but it's far too rigoristic. No matter what organization he takes, it's either a classic cult, a destructive sect, or a commercial cult. The approach lacked scientific rigor, and we started growing tired of this rigorist mindset where everyone was supposedly bad, while we alone were pure and righteous.

People would constantly come to us and ask: 'Can you tell us who is NOT a sect or a cult?' We'd start going through the list and recall — maybe the Orthodox Old Believers... and that's where our imagination would run out. Because after that, we'd have to talk about Adventists, but according to Dvorkin's classification, they're a classic cult that's been around for a hundred years, and so on.

The issue of terminology was also troubling: 'totalitarian,' 'non-totalitarian' — who even introduced these terms, and is it appropriate to use them? In the West, there's a trend towards more neutral terms, referring to those groups as new religious movements (NRMs), religious organizations, or something with the prefix 'neo-.' The word 'cult' itself already sounds like a curse word. Saying 'this is a cult' is like branding something with a stigma. You can't say this is a cult, but it's a good one. Or this is a sect, but, you know, it's harmless. That just sounds ridiculous and absurd. So the terminology issue came up as well.

That's why we started having conversations about the fact that Alexander Dvorkin is certainly a knowledgeable specialist, and his book is impressive, but he considers everyone around to be too much of a 'vermin.' No matter what religious organization he takes, they're 'all vermin, one worse than the other.'"

Regarding terminology, it is worth noting that the term "totalitarian sect" was introduced into the post-Soviet space by none other than Alexander Dvorkin at the start of his anticult "career" in Russia, when he first used it in March of 1993. He himself has repeatedly mentioned this fact [8]. Afterwards, his colleagues began to use this term alongside the concept of "destructive cults."

Notably, the use of the term “totalitarian sects” is one of the key indicators for identifying Alexander Dvorkin’s agents in mass media.

In the above excerpt, Valeriy Otstavnykh touches upon the concept of stigmatization associated with the labels “cult” and “sect.” The portal actfiles.org has repeatedly revealed the historical origins of stigmatization using terms such as “cult” and “sect” from the times of Nazi Germany. Nazi apologists and anticultists led by Walter Künneth employed the method of “marking with yellow stars” — derogatory labels used to designate subhumans. Nazis attached the “yellow star” symbol to the clothing of Jewish people. This signified the beginning of a shameful tragedy that culminated in the Holocaust. More on “marking with yellow stars” can be found in the article “Method of Marking with Yellow Stars”.

The following excerpt from the interview illustrates this further:

“— What do you associate his attitude with? Is it a bias in classification, or what? What should it be like so that ‘not everyone around would be vermin’?

— I would base it solely on specific cases where crimes were proven by investigation and trial. Because if you read any edition of Dvorkin’s ‘Sectology,’ very often, except for Russian sects like Rodnovers, Anastasians, the sect of God Kuzya, followers of Porfiry Ivanov, and so forth… So when you read about Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Scientologists, or some guru like Sathya Sai Baba, there are always references to things people allegedly did in some year in another country. Yet, even the number of those incidents doesn’t allow for an unequivocal conclusion that such a religious organization requires immediate banning in Russia. Because when it comes to Russian examples of criminal offenses, their number is miniscule.

— So, you don’t approve of this kind of approach to evaluating religious organizations, where, for instance, a crime committed by a follower of some sect is taken as the basis…

— ...a crime committed, let's say, in 1968 in the state of Arkansas by a member of some organization, and an entire concept is built on that, claiming that this horrific act was caused by the person's adherence to the teaching.

At that proverbial conference where I had my discourse with Dvorkin, I told him that his book is very good, but all his references are to English-language sources. For example, he wrote that 'The Watchtower' magazine, such-and-such edition, says this and that, and then follows some quote. I said, 'Fine, we'll manage to read English somehow, but how about publishing something like an anthology where these references are translated and visible in the articles and not taken out of context? Otherwise, what happens is we're referencing a reference. There's an original source in English that you cite, and we have to cite you citing the original source. It doesn't come across as very convincing, even to ourselves, when debating someone.' He said, 'Yes, right, it's a good idea,' but that's where it ended.

— So, it wasn't done?

— No, it wasn't done and hasn't been done to this day.

— Why? Is it impossible? Or is it just that no one gets around to it, or no one needs that? What is the reason, in your view?

— I don't understand why it wasn't done. I think it could have been done. I just think that if we had independent courts that demanded original sources, those against whom cases were filed (so-called destructive organizations) would demand in court that the original English-language source be provided with an accurate translation demonstrating extremist statements or ideas, and the courts would demand this, too. Then, undoubtedly, such an anthology would have been published — there's no doubt about that. The Patriarch himself would have overseen the project.

— So, it's just not done because no one needs that? Courts already understand everything without it?

— Yes, in courts, everyone has long understood everything: who's against whom, and who needs to be supported.

— Why, in your opinion, has such a method of evaluating organizations been chosen, where an old crime, which clearly is not representative, is used to justify labeling an organization as a destructive cult?

— I can only draw one obvious conclusion: there were no such crimes recorded in Russia. Or their number is negligibly low. I can't explain it any other way.

— Then what's the goal? Is this a peculiar method of missionary activity, or what's the purpose?

— It's a way to scare people so they don't join those organizations, and to scare officials so they don't allow those organizations to exist. As in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses: they were ultimately banned. And the final killer argument widely used by my former colleagues today is that 'the organizational center of this destructive group is located in the United States, in Brooklyn, no less!'

— You mean, politics?

— Yes, politics. They're, kind of, all spies; they're all engaged in subversive activities; they all work for the CIA, or if not the CIA, then Mossad or MI6. Therefore, something should be done about them even if they haven't committed any bloody, horrifying crimes in Russia, like the gas attack in the Tokyo subway. Naturally, we can say it's politics, that the Church has merged with the state. Today, the work of anticultists, as my former colleagues are called, has an overtly political character."

The key purpose of scaring people is clearly explained by the term "terror." The Latin word "terror" translates as "fear" or "horror." This term became widely used during the French Revolution of 1793–1794, known as the Reign of Terror, when public executions by guillotine were conducted before huge crowds. The

main targets and victims of terror were not the condemned individuals under the guillotine, as their execution would have occurred regardless of whether it was public or private. The primary targets and victims of terror were the crowds gathered in the squares. Witnessing the executions, they experienced immense fear and horror. In addition to fear, they felt profound oppression, anxiety, and helplessness, knowing that any of them could be the next victim. This made the masses even more controllable by those perpetrating the terror.

This topic was explored in detail in "The IMPACT" documentary and in the film's text version published on actfiles.org.

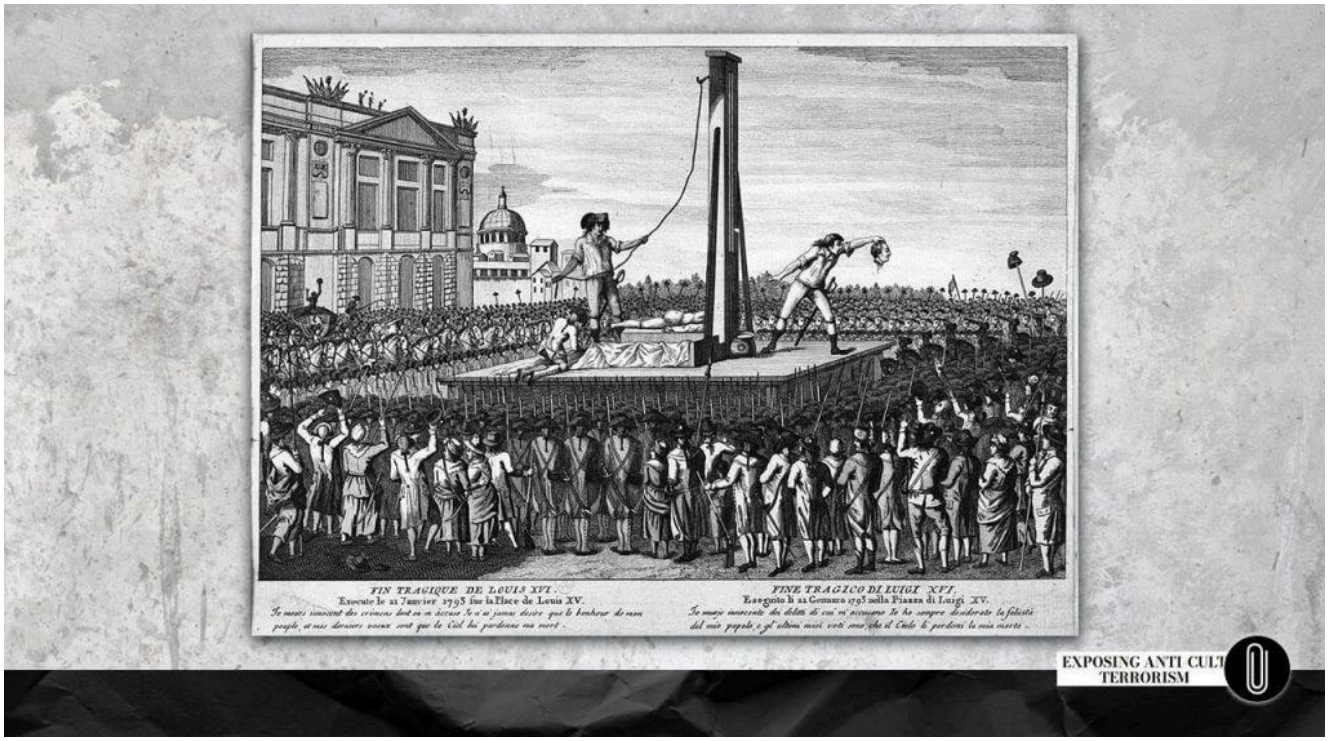

FIN TRAGIQUE DE LOUIS XVI.
Executé le 21 Janvier 1793 sur la Place de Louis XV.
FINE TRAGICO DI LUIGI XVI.
Eseguito li 21 Gennaro 1793 nella Piazza di Luigi XV.
EXPOSING ANTI CULT TERRORISM

Illustration from GetArchive.net

Present-day examples of such demonstrative anticult terror include the banning of numerous organizations in Russia at the behest of RACIRS, accompanied by sensational articles in the media and TV reports. One such organization is Jehovah's Witnesses. The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses is detailed in the article "The History of Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. Causes and Perpetrators" as well as in "The IMPACT" documentary.

But let's go back to the interview again.

“HOW THE CRUSHING UNIT CAME TO THE MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT

— Why frighten people? It’s not just for fun, after all? ***Do you think that the ordering party, the main beneficiary, in this case is precisely the Russian Orthodox Church?***

— Definitely. The Russian Orthodox Church which relies on law enforcement agencies. *Let me tell you a very interesting story. In 2011, when the Organized Crime Control Department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs was dissolved, the famous homicide unit, remember? …However, since organized crime in our country had long been legalized and merged with official bodies, the unit was disbanded. Yet, what to do with the staff? They were turned into Centers for Combating Extremism. And those guys …without any education, without any understanding of the delicate nature of religion, how to work with people, recruit, interview, or talk, applied their methods to ordinary people, to believers with subtle mental organization.*

At first, they began desperately looking for a target for their work. They found it in nationalists. For some reason, they initially decided that nationalists were Russia’s main threat. I remember that period. Then nationalists quickly ‘ran out’ and weren’t sufficient to submit reports. That’s when I remember the first visit of those guys to our Missionary Department.

Employees from the Tula Center for Combating Extremism under the regional police department came to us. They came and frankly said, ‘Guys, you know, we were fighting nationalists, but now we’ve run out of them, and we have no one left to fight. We heard you’re also fighting — good job, by the way — against some vermin, enemies of the state, sectarians. But we have no information about them. Can’t you share some info with us? Where, on what street, in what house do the leaders of various destructive religious communities in the Tula region live?’ So, my colleague, Alexey, went ahead and started cooperating with them, or rather, the Missionary Department, in his person, did. For me, as they say in criminal slang, interacting and working with them was ‘zapadlo’ [sl. ‘beneath one’s dignity, unworthy, shameful.’ Translator’s

note] because since the end of 2011, I became a politicized person, that is, I shifted to a protest while still remaining inside the church.

Thus, those guys were given tips on where, who, and what 'bad' people and organizations existed in the Tula region, along with locations and some literature for them to familiarize themselves with. I believe they were given Dvorkin's manual and a few other books.

— Were they interested in specific crimes, or were they just asking about some 'bad people'?

— They were asking, 'Where do villains live? What destructive cults are there in the Tula region? What are their addresses, who are their pastors, and so on?'

Concerning data on addresses, down to the street, house, and the name of a representative of a persecuted organization, it is appropriate to recall the remarks of RACIRS member, archpriest Dmitry Smirnov at the international online conference "Totalitarian Sects: A Threat of the 21st Century," organized by Alexander Dvorkin in 2001 [9]:

"Secondly, I call this 'names and addresses.' In any city, a couple of people are quite capable of finding out the addresses, last names, first names, and patronymics, as well as home addresses of the leaders of all existing cults. Well, you can create posters and photocopy them, just like our 'brethren in mind', the Scientologists, do, and paste all government offices with them. You can also take their photos as they leave their homes so every city resident knows them by face, knows their names, patronymics, home addresses, and phone numbers. Maybe even their faxes and emails. And let them continue to live their lives.

The second step is to say what this cult is like. Very briefly, in a telegraphic style. For many, that will be enough to make them leave the city. At the very least, more than one brick will fly into their window... Biographies of all cult leaders, with pictures of their 'mugs'."

"...here we need a real and ruthless fight within the framework of the Criminal Code." — Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov [9], 2001.

Международная конференция
"Тоталитарные секты — угроза XXI века"
23 – 25 апреля 2001 г.

Из фонограммы выступления протоиерея Дмитрия Смирнова (Москва)

Документы времени

57

International Conference
"Totalitarian Sects: Threat of the 21st Century"
April 23-25, 2001

Sound record of the speech by Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov (Moscow)

...Citizens' appeals... are a serious irritating factor... The old Soviet way, appeals to all sorts of congresses... are very effective... For instance, it took us two weeks to return one of the temples in downtown Moscow that had been occupied by a warehouse of the Ministry of Defense. The order was signed the next day after the Minister of Defense had received more than 800 telegrams with different texts, but on the same topic.

It costs a certain amount of money, but it's inevitable. In the same way, we can ensure a closure of any sect, absolutely, if we just wish to and involve two people: one will write appeals, and the other one will deliver them.

The same applies to the work with public authorities. I have experience when four people got together and ensured that the law on reproductive human rights, which was supposed to open a wide path to sexual education of schoolchildren and so on, was voted down. Four people worked with the Duma, and the law was voted down. Sometimes a minimum number of activists is enough to manage a national-scale case. Such activists should just be found and should act as one little team.

...As you know, the state is a machine for the oppression of one class by another. There is a class that lives at the expense of people and governs them... how we can put pressure on the authorities of Nizhny Novgorod.

Secondly, I called it "names and addresses". Two people in any city can easily find out first and last names, patronymics, and home addresses of leaders of all existing sects. You can create posters, no worse than our brothers in mind Scientologists do, xerox many copies of them, and stick those posters on the walls of all government buildings. You can also take pictures of sect leaders coming out of their houses so that every resident of your city would know them by sight, would know their first and last names, patronymics, home addresses and phone numbers, as well as fax numbers and emails. And let them keep living.

The second stage is to tell everyone what kind of a sect that is. Very briefly, in a telegraphic way. I think this will be enough to urge many of them to leave the city. At least more than one brick will fly into their windows. I'm not an instigator.

...Biographies of all sect leaders with photos of their faces. For example, how to put it mildly... The face of Swami Prabhupada speaks for itself, what kind of a man he is if he has such a face.

Documents of Time

57

Screenshots from the website of Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, npar.ru; INDEPENDENT PSYCHIATRIC JOURNAL "IPA HERALD", Issue 3, 2001

Dmitry Smirnov

You can publish a list of totalitarian sects in the cheapest newspapers as an advertisement, or you can collect money from parishioners little by little and show such a list on TV as a news ticker, and the list should include sect leaders and their addresses so that people know them... Don't use the name "totalitarian sect", but you can think of something else... say, a destructive cult. And you should never enter into a polemic with sectarians.

... They don't actually write that they're Jehovists, Jehovah's Witnesses. No, they take a Christian church and keep lying, so any polemic with them is absolutely and totally impossible because those people are incapable. As the previous speaker testified to us, and the one before him too, they simply lack this part of thinking, it has been destroyed. Therefore, we need a real and merciless fight within the framework of the Criminal Code.

... Professor Kondratiev said quite rightly that there is no such a fight, and the church is to blame for that.
.. Here's the thing. Thank God, we were born and raised in the empire, and, of course, every Russian person has a normal imperial consciousness.
Our small Russian Orthodox Church which has only 19,500 priests, compared to 350,000 before the revolution, who were mercilessly shot, starved, drowned, and so on, surely cannot fulfill the function that the empire assigned to it before the revolution.
...It is necessary to establish a youth organization in every parish.
...I run nine parishes....
...Now we have 2,000,000 registered drug dealers alone.

...So, we can establish such organizations where there will be sports, where there will be some intrigue, from where we would send those young guys as scouts to sects to find out addresses, names and photographs, so that they create their own entities there, and thus we would blow up those sects from the inside. I certainly say "blow up" in a figurative sense. God forbid there were human victims! Do you understand? It will be a very interesting practical lesson for the guys, and it will be a prevention.

...In our North Moscow District where most of my churches are located, a trial has been going on against Jehovah's Witnesses, and only our parish gave money to hire the lawyer and sent guys there to occupy the courtroom, otherwise all seats would be occupied by Jehovists.

...From time to time, some attacks arise. So far, you won't find any positive material about the church in any Russian or foreign newspaper except the church newspapers. If you compare the current press with the press of 1917, 1918 or 1920, it will seem to you that articles have been written by one author.
...the press exists in order to prepare public opinion. For instance, no one has written that we are the only country in the world over the entire two thousand years of Christianity that has restored half of the monasteries of the whole Russian Empire, namely 556, within just ten years. Or that a lot of girls and boys emerged who wanted to become monks. Even though 90% of them didn't succeed, one in ten remained.

...Huge valuables are exported for green pieces of paper. So, if each of us doesn't realize... because we are used to the fact that Russia is big, Russia is powerful, Russia is great, that we have a lot of nuclear buttons, that we can actually destroy the world; yes, it is basically possible. However, now we don't have people who have the courage to push those buttons. People are spiritually petty. There are no people who would venture to do that. They can only say that yes, we can dictate, we can call the tune.

...Our birth rate is terrible, millions of children are killed every year. We need to at least save those who have already been born from degradation. We mustn't give them to drug addicts, we mustn't give them to sectarians, we mustn't give them to the mercy of some kind of valeology, sexual education and debauchery because it is now being introduced through the Ministry of Education.

...Elections in Nizhny Novgorod are coming soon. Every deputy has to understand... if his program doesn't contain the words "fight against totalitarian sects", he won't be elected... We hired them, you know. They are our servants.

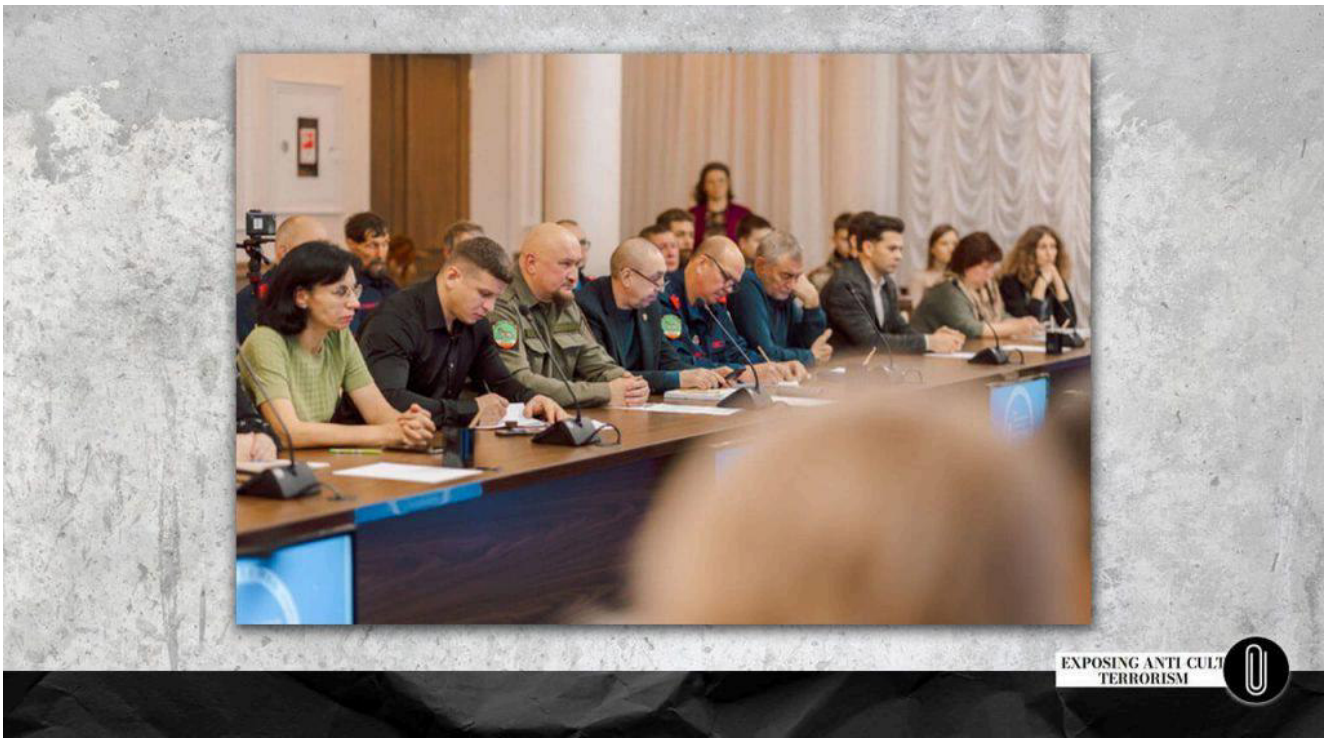
Screenshots from the website of Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, npar.ru; INDEPENDENT PSYCHIATRIC JOURNAL "IPA HERALD", Issue 3, 2001

To confirm the collaboration between RACIRS representatives and law enforcement, we include materials from the 2023 speeches of RACIRS

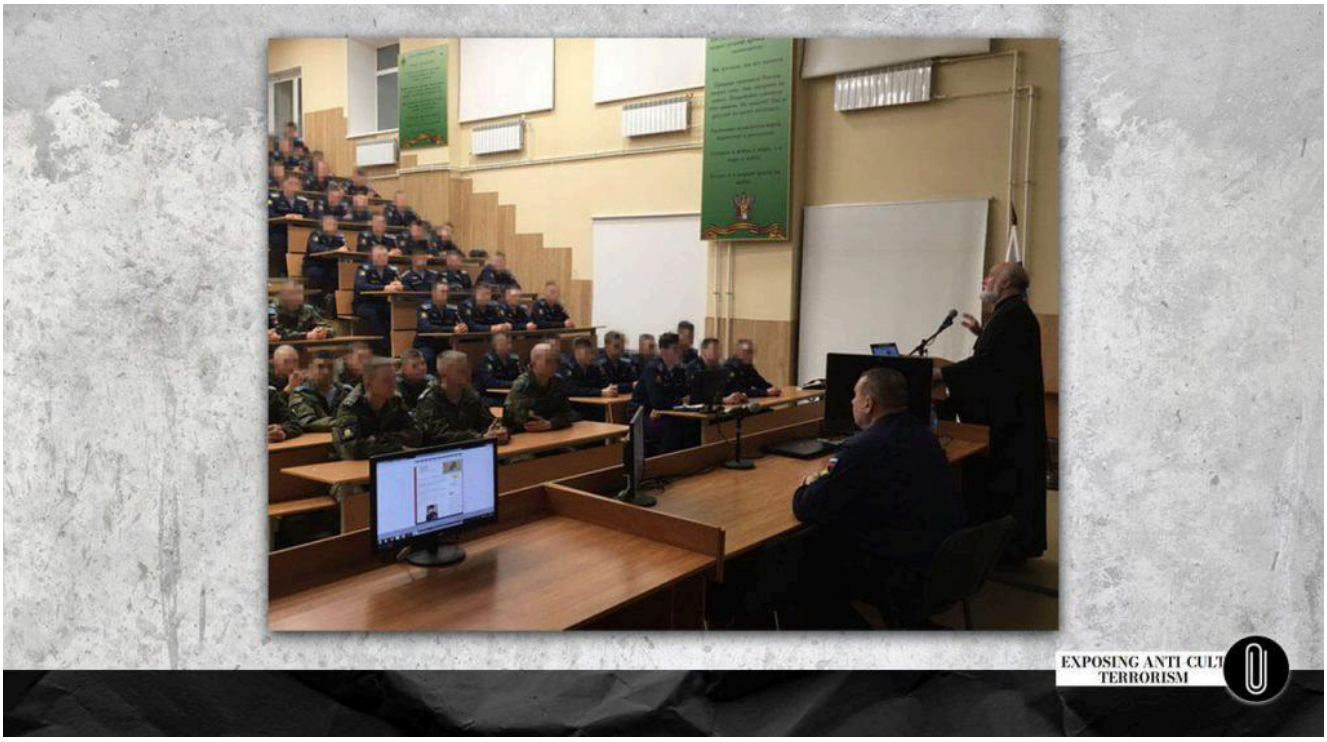
president Alexander Dvorkin and vice president Alexander Novopashin at several institutions in Ryazan, Russia [10]:

Photos sourced from ansobor.ru

Photos sourced from ansobor.ru



Photos sourced from ansobor.ru



Photos sourced from ansobor.ru

Photos sourced from ansobor.ru

We also present photographs from Alexander Dvorkin's lecture to the Ministry of Internal Affairs staff:

Photos sourced from shahteparh.ru

Photos sourced from shahteparh.ru

Now, we go back to the interview with former RACIRS member Valeriy Otstavnykh:

"I recall another curious moment about those visitors. All kinds of people come to the church, including those with criminal records, you know. After those guys from the E Center stopped by, one parishioner with such a background approached me and asked, 'Who are they?' I replied, 'They are very advanced people from the Center for Combating Extremism.' He didn't believe it: 'Come on,' he said, 'stop kidding me. I know that bald guy. For years, he was running protection rackets for prostitutes on Lenin Avenue. So what's he doing now?' I said, 'Now, he's fighting enemies of the Russian nation.'

This isn't the only merger of RACIRS and the state. As you probably know, our Minister of Justice is Mr. Konovalov. Alexander Konovalov may be called my fellow student. We studied part-time together under Alexander Dvorkin at Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities. He created the Expert Religious Studies Council under the Ministry of Justice, which includes Dvorkin and several other RACIRS members who are now tasked with providing expert opinions on religious organizations for the Ministry of Justice. That's the connection.

LINK BETWEEN RACIRS AND ROC

— You mentioned that the main beneficiary of the fight against religious organizations and NRMs is clearly the Russian Orthodox Church. Can it be said that Dvorkin's activities are overseen by someone within the ROC (MP), or is Alexander Leonidovich completely independent?

— To be honest, I didn't notice any such oversight when I worked there. When Dvorkin was just starting and Patriarch Alexy II (Ridiger) was alive, the work on sects and cults wasn't a primary focus. The priority was to restore churches and publish literature in large quantities. In my view, Alexy II was a more balanced and less politicized figure than Kirill.

I think Dvorkin simply offered his services to the church. At one time, these services were welcomed and accepted. Now, I think they're just in line with the trend because there's America and 'Westies,' and there's the 'Russian World' — it all fits into the narrative of the new state ideology. 'Russia is surrounded by enemies; the enemies are the fifth column. The enemies infiltrate not only through political parties, public foundations, and various movements, but also through religious organizations.' It seems to me that Dvorkin and RACIRS are now in tune with the trend.

— They caught the wave?

— The wave itself came to them. They didn't catch it — it engulfed them, and they ended up riding it like surfers."

It is quite notable that over many years of work, the former RACIRS member who also worked within the ROC structure didn't observe any oversight or guidance from ROC clergy over Alexander Dvorkin, not even from senior hierarchs. So, who are RACIRS and ROC currently subordinate to? If, as claimed in the interview, ROC is the main beneficiary of the fight against religious organizations, who within ROC is acting in this area? After all, it's not the church as an organization but specific individuals who make decisions and take actions. This is especially true given that in recent years, many priests

within ROC have also become victims of Alexander Dvorkin's persecution, with many banned from ministry, defrocked, or expelled from the church.

To confirm the presence of a repressive flywheel within the ROC itself, we now turn to an important part of the interview with Valeriy Otstavnykh. Here is the next excerpt:

"— Then I have a small question on the topic of Father Vladimir Golovin and his Orthodox parish in the city of Bolgar. Several complaints were submitted to RACIRS about the parish. They looked into this and didn't feel like going there or resolving anything about him — it was easier to 'expose.' However, we're not talking about some underground group secretly doing strange things somewhere. We're talking about a fully canonical Orthodox church that is entirely subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church, acknowledges church authority, has its own bishop, and so on. Nevertheless, RACIRS published a series of articles that made a lot of noise, provoking a sharply negative reaction on social media from Father Vladimir's parishioners who defended him. There were lots of comments. It was clear that people were genuinely upset and hurt. When RACIRS does something like this, do they need any kind of official approval from the church leadership, or do they just do whatever they want in this regard?

— No, RACIRS is a public organization, a Russian Orthodox public organization that operates with the Patriarch's blessing. It has the right to evaluate the activities of various religious organizations including those within the Orthodox Church.

— So, no approval from the Patriarchate is needed whatsoever?

— No. In the past, Alexander Dvorkin had a good relationship with Patriarch Alexy II. I don't know how it is now with Kirill. So, no, they act independently, absolutely autonomously, and without looking to anyone. Essentially, they're like an internal security service, akin to internal security departments in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the FSB, and other law enforcement.

— Like a department monitoring corruption in the ranks, etc.?

— Not so much corruption as discipline and ideological uniformity. RACIRS has come to be perceived by bishops as an internal security service directly subordinate to the Patriarchate. Although this isn't formally written anywhere, it's how things have turned out. RACIRS' actions and stance are regarded as the stance of the Patriarchate or the Patriarch himself, at the very least. This is never publicly stated, but I think it's implied.

— How does this manifest in real life?

— I've never seen anyone from the bishops put Dvorkin or RACIRS back in their place or try to argue or conflict with them. Neither the previous Patriarch nor the current one has done this, to my knowledge."

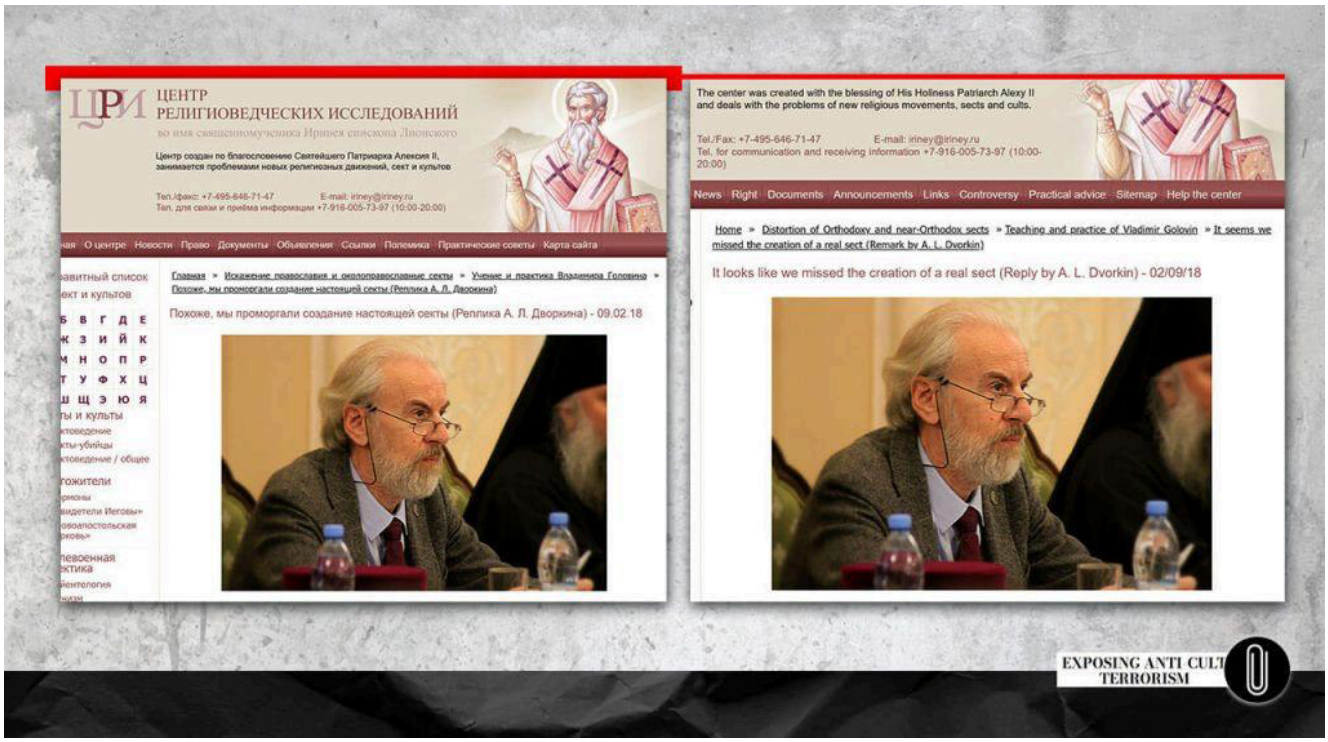
This excerpt vividly demonstrates who currently holds the real, not nominal, power within the ROC — power that not only ordinary priests fear, but also the highest hierarchs.

Yet, let's go back to the persecution of Father Vladimir Golovin, orchestrated by RACIRS and, more specifically, by Alexander Dvorkin. In 2018, RACIRS vice president and Dvorkin's disciple, archpriest Alexander Novopashin publicly launched a campaign to discredit Vladimir Golovin. He delivered a report in the Patriarchal Hall of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

In an interview with the regional TV and radio company Gubernia-33 (Vladimir Oblast, Russia, 2019), Alexander Novopashin stated: "*You know, very recently, Archpriest Vladimir Golovin from Bolgar city in Tatarstan was defrocked. As it happens, I played a significant role in this. I was the first to speak publicly at the Christmas Educational Readings in Moscow last year.*" [11]

However, it later became clear that the initiator of this report and the persecution itself was RACIRS president Alexander Dvorkin who stated, *"...I asked my friend and associate, Archpriest Alexander Novopashin from Novosibirsk, to prepare a report on this subject"* [12]. That same year, the Center

for Religious Studies in the name of Hieromartyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, founded and led by Dvorkin, published an article on its website titled "We seem to have overlooked the creation of a real sect."[13] Following the long-running campaign to harass this priest, the ROC Patriarch Kirill approved the church court's decision to defrock Father Vladimir Golovin and his son, Anastasy Golovin.


ЦЕНТР
РЕЛИГИОВЕДЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ
Похоже, мы проморгали создание настоящей секты (Реплика А. Л. Дворкина) - 09.02.18
The center was created with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II and deals with the problems of new religious movements, sects and cults.
News Right Documents Announcements Links Controversy Practical advice Sitemap Help the center
It looks like we missed the creation of a real sect (Reply by A. L. Dvorkin) - 02/09/18
EXPOSING ANTI CULT TERRORISM

Screenshots from the website of the Center for Religious Studies in the name of Hieromartyr Irenaeus of Lyons (president Alexander Dvorkin) iriney.ru

So who truly holds power in the ROC today? Who do priests fear? Who dictates the rules? Who directs the dictatorship and repression? Who decides whom to condemn and whom to pardon?

Earlier, the portal actfiles.org published an article titled "Russian Orthodox Church: From a Spiritual Mission to an Instrument of Propaganda and Influence at the International Level" which addressed persecution within ROC and examined the reasons behind ROC's drastic ideological shift in society.

Below we cite the next excerpt from the interview:

"LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AT DVORKIN'S CONFERENCES

"— Another question, Valeriy Vladimirovich. Sometimes Alexander Dvorkin shares information with the media about court cases or investigations that are far from being available to the general public. Can you comment on this?

— I think there's an exchange of information. Especially since his connections are at such a level — the Ministry of Justice, some information can reach them. Working with officials and law enforcement is now also a trend for RACIRS. When traveling to a city, Alexander Dvorkin requests to gather not only students from local universities and people at cultural centers, but also district governors, law enforcement officers, and so forth, and he communicates with them directly.

— Does Alexander Dvorkin coordinate with the local administration before arriving in a region to ensure attendance?

— No. For instance, when Alexander Dvorkin arrives and arrangements are made about his itinerary, he requests that one of the agenda items be a meeting with the local administration or a gathering of district administrators, representatives of law enforcement, the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and so on. This is in addition to meetings with students and open lectures. For him, meeting decision-makers in the region is very important."

The exchange of information with law enforcement agencies, the personal work of Dvorkin and his apologists with officials and law enforcers, including members of the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and so on — all the exact steps were once taken by the Nazi Apologetic Center for combating sects, headed by Walter Künneth.

Künneth was really pleased with the Gestapo's interest in his work. Here's what he wrote in his report to the leadership of the Reich's Protestant Church: *"The Gestapo has expressed great interest in the cult archives of the Apologetic Center, as well as our work in combating free thought, Marxism, and Bolshevism. The Gestapo has expressed a desire to lead the fight against illegal free thought alongside the Apologetic Center in the future. The exchange of materials between the Gestapo and the Apologetic Center has already begun."*

Künneth's Apologetic Center also collaborated with the Reich Ministry of Propaganda led by Joseph Goebbels and the Reich Ministry of Interior. This collaboration focused on developing materials against Jews and sects. Lists of so-called sects — essentially any associations the Apologetic Center deemed dangerous to the national ideology — were supplemented annually and submitted to the Gestapo.

We'd like to cite another excerpt from the interview:

"— Does the hosting party arrange Dvorkin's meetings with local administration and law enforcement? Representatives of the Missionary Department arrange them, as it turns out?

— Yes, they call the regional administration and request that officials gather at a specific time. Open attendance events are, of course, voluntary; only those interested come. But when he speaks at the diocesan administration, attendance is mandatory. Seminarians are pulled from lectures to fill the hall's back rows if needed. This is often combined with the annual diocesan assembly to avoid unnecessary travel for priests, or even a separate conference is held.

— Is attendance by representatives of the administration and law enforcement also mandatory? Or are they genuinely interested and come on their own to hear Dvorkin?

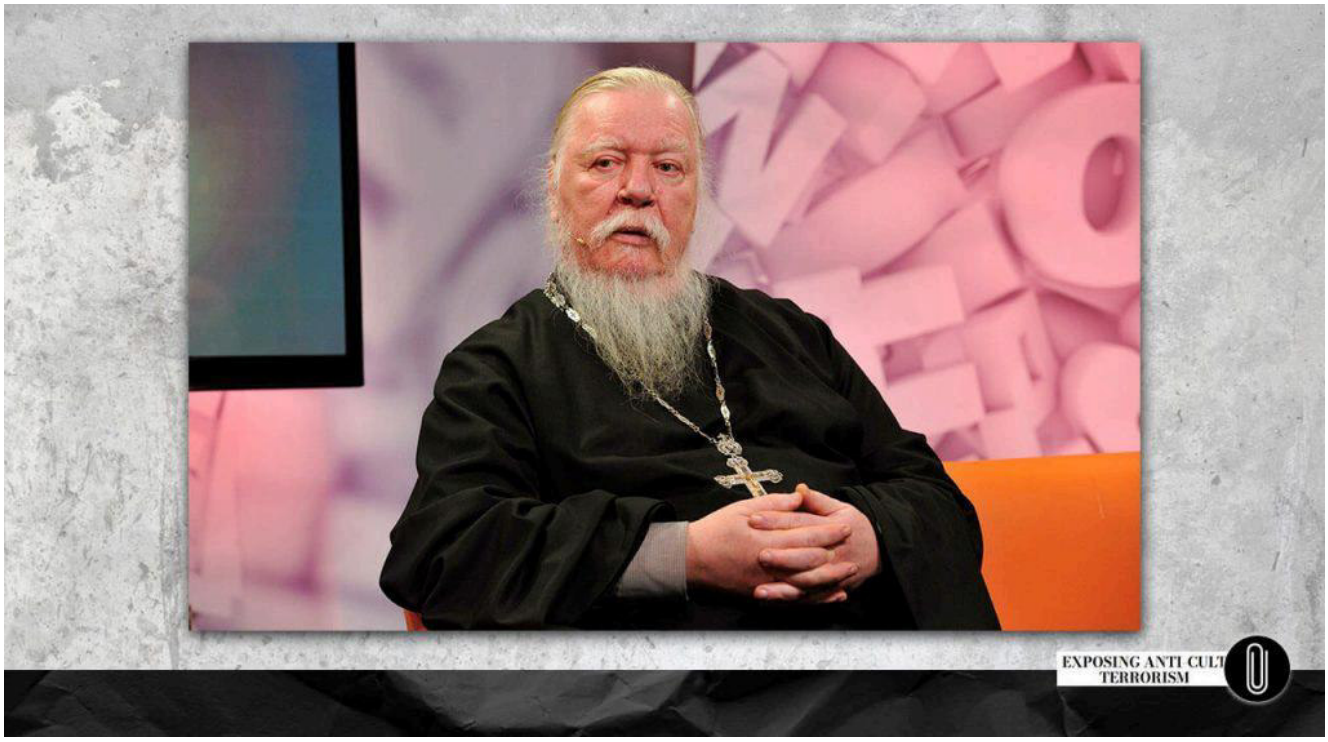
— No, of course not. There's no genuine interest — it's mandatory. This is organized through diocesan administration units and phone calls to the regional administration. Here, the authority of the church and the Moscow Patriarchate comes into play. When they say, 'A professor from Moscow, Alexander Dvorkin, is coming with the local metropolitan's blessing to meet heads of district administrations, we kindly ask you to ensure attendance at such-and-such time,' it's a request the administration cannot refuse.

— If it's not a secret, did you yourself ever invite the local administration or arrange such meetings? Or was that not part of your duties?

— It wasn't my responsibility, but if the diocesan secretary or department head hadn't made the call, I could call the governor's or mayor's office at any time to discuss that. There would definitely be no refusals."

RACIRS' significant influence over officials, governors, mayors, and their affiliates is evident if we recall the archpriest Dmitry Smirnov's remarks during the above-mentioned 2001 anticult conference:

"..."Elections in Nizhny Novgorod are coming soon. ***Every deputy has to understand: if his program doesn't contain the words 'fight against totalitarian sects,' he won't be elected. We hired them, you know? They are our servants."***
— Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov. [9]



Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov

We return to the interview:

"RUTHLESSNESS TOWARD ENEMIES OF THE REICH

— Another question: based on your personal experience, what qualities or criteria must a person possess to be accepted or invited into RACIRS?

— Ruthlessness toward 'enemies of the Reich.' Remember the movie "Seventeen Moments of Spring"? A RACIRS member must be 'ruthless toward enemies of the Reich.'

— What about qualities like objectivity or impartiality? Are those taken into account?

— You know, this isn't a scientific organization. It doesn't study religions and sects, despite its name — the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects. In reality, it's the internal security service of the church. There's no scientific work there whatsoever. Although I know that some defend theses at St. Tikhon's University under Dvorkin's academic supervision, on theology, for instance, or on various sects. For example, I've read a thesis on occultism. However, the organization's goal isn't to study religions, save lost souls, or collect scientific data, but to fight so-called sects. Which is why they keep a special database. My former colleague Alexey enjoys collecting such data for the database.

For instance, at that same conference where I had a minor debate with Alexander Dvorkin, Alexey also delivered a speech. He detailed, 'In our region, there is such-and-such community with such-and-such pastor in such-and-such city. His house, apartment, and balcony are such-and-such, and on his balcony hangs this and that...'"

Once again, it becomes clear how vital ideological uniformity is among RACIRS members, as evidenced by how its members consistently act in full alignment with the policies of their leadership year after year. This is confirmed not only by this specific interview, but also by the previously cited materials from the speech of Dvorkin's close associate, RACIRS member Dmitry Smirnov, at the 2001 anticult conference.

"— So, it's more about collecting mundane details rather than conducting research?

— Not only mundane details. It demonstrates thoroughness in gathering information. I remember that our local bishop took his head in his hands and bragged to Dvorkin about how tough our professionals were to know what kind of underwear the local Protestant pastor was drying on his balcony.

Previously, one had to attend meetings in person to estimate sect membership or identify leaders and so on. It was necessary to come to their meeting, and when you come to meetings several times, your face is already familiar; you're already known in the city, and it's difficult to collect objective data. But with the rise of the Internet, it has become extremely easy. A person from the Missionary Department logs into the accounts or groups of religious organizations on social media where members share their own information and details about themselves: where they're based, their membership numbers, who's their pastor, locations, and so on.

As far as I know, the following reconnaissance technique is also employed: a missionary, ruthless to 'enemies of the Reich,' logs in under an alias like Vasya and feigns interest: 'I'd like to join your sect. How are things going? I heard your pastor is greedy, what about money...?' Etcetera... They write anonymously. These sneaky games can be played. Meanwhile, representatives of the so-called 'destructive' religious organizations may not even realize they're communicating with someone from the ROC's (MP's) internal security service.

— Meaning, reconnaissance work is actually carried out?

— Absolutely. They gather intelligence data. It's undercover work."

In confirmation of these words and the fact that RACIRS as ROC's internal security service is closely intertwined with other Russian agencies, there are criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses based on the testimony of a "secret witness." In particular, the Russian security services used this method when initiating criminal cases against two residents of Kemerovo, Jehovah's Witnesses who were subsequently arrested despite the fact that one of them

has a 2-degree disability [14], as well as when initiating a criminal case against a foreign Jehovah's Witness, Dennis Christensen, a citizen of Denmark.

What are secret witnesses needed for? They are a highly convenient judicial tool, allowing concealment of undercover operatives or fabrication of missing evidence in a case. This tool often aims not to uncover factual evidence to either prove or disprove the charges, but to corroborate pre-existing, often fabricated, charges. Secret witnesses embedded in organizations beforehand bring out information from their interactions with future defendants that cannot be verified or evaluated in any way. Courts invariably side with such testimonies without requiring additional proof. According to some attorneys for Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, law enforcement officers sometimes provoke interactions and initiate contact with Jehovah's Witnesses; they seek to discuss the Bible with them and later claim in court that the believers attempted to recruit them.

Interestingly, it is suspected that secret witnesses may include not only law enforcement officers or official RACIRS members, but also theologists. For instance, according to attorney Anton Bogdanov, Dennis Christensen's case was based on testimony from a secret witness under the alias Alexey Ermolov, who is allegedly Oleg Kurdyumov, a theologist from Orel University [15, 16].

To sum up, we will cite the final excerpt from Valeriy Otstavnykh's interview:

"— Is this data collection conducted to attack sects? Or is there any scientific purpose involved?

— The goal is to gather information. For example, under the leadership of Father Serapion (Mitko), deputy head of the Synodal Missionary Department, a missionary map of Russia has been created. As I understand it, it's a consolidated set of data on various religious organizations, including so-called destructive ones, located in various dioceses. At least in our Tula diocese, data on all major organizations has been collected and classified.

— Who subsequently uses these data, and how? Once the data are collected, catalogued, systematized and placed on the map, what happens to them next?

— They are used to get an overall picture — a religious landscape of a given region: who dominates? Protestants, for instance. How many are there, and what types? Are they traditional or non-traditional? Pentecostals or Neo-Pentecostals? Are there charismatic organizations? The goal is to know where they gather, how many there are, and their membership. It's essentially monitoring and controlling the activities of those organizations.

For example, someone comes to the Missionary Department and says that their daughter is attending a religious organization that calls itself 'just Christians.' You can ask for the address, check the database, and say: 'Ah, she's attending this group. Here's what they do, and this is how they work with people, so we can advise you this and that.' Or, for instance, an organization decides to hold an event without listing its full name. This isn't a major crime, but still a violation of the law. You can also look up the database to see what this organization is, and then a letter can be sent to the administration with a copy to the prosecutor's office, pointing out that the organization located at such-and-such address is holding an event and distributing posters without including its full name, thereby misleading the public.

— Does the prosecutor's office typically respond to such statements?

— Yes, absolutely. Nowadays, even more so, I believe."

Conclusions

This interview with Valeriy Otstavnykh was published in 2018, although he had left RACIRS in 2013. His observations as a firsthand witness, recorded in the interview, pertain to the period before his resignation in 2013. His conclusions and assumptions are both striking and revealing, especially when considered alongside other facts he did not address, such as the direct transfer of knowledge and methods to Alexander Dvorkin from the Protestant apologist and anticultist Walter Künneth, a Nazi ideologist.

It is also worth noting that during Otstavnykh's time in RACIRS, Russia could still be described as a country with democratic principles, respect for human rights, and adherence to its Constitution. However, even within that relatively calm and democratic period, his later reflections on RACIRS as a kind of internal security service for the ROC (MP), the practice of "ruthlessness toward enemies of the Reich" within RACIRS, and embedment of its ideology into religion, law enforcement, government agencies, and beyond, paint a vivid picture of how Dvorkin's totalitarian organization had already spread its metastases into the Orthodox Church and Russian society. The aftermath of these metastases became evident in many anti-democratic processes, acts of terror, repressions, and Nazi-like ideology by 2015–2017, with the situation worsening further over time.

Today, Alexander Dvorkin's actions have inflicted and continue to inflict suffering on the Russian people. Many have been imprisoned for their non-Orthodox faith, expelled from the ROC and Russia, or tortured to death by law enforcement after being branded as "extremists" or "sectarians" by Dvorkin. Others have had their children taken away by child protection services. In Russia, under Dvorkin's influence, human rights institutions, the Constitution, and individual freedoms have been systematically dismantled. Even the teaching of Jesus Christ has been eradicated, leaving only the façade of the ROC, with mold replacing the presence of God.

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